

Testimony of Eileen M. Healy  
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing  
February 16, 2017

**Restore \$528,680 in State Funding to CTs Independent Living Centers**

My name is Eileen Healy. I live in Woodbury. I am the Chairperson for the CT Association of Centers for Independent Living and the Executive Director of Independence Northwest - one of CT's five independent living centers that have been annually slated for elimination in the Governor's budgets. I also represent the people wearing the lovely yellow t-shirts since many may not get to testify tonight. I'm here to urge you to reject the Governor's elimination of funding for Independent Living Centers (ILCs).

Thanks to legislators, the ILCs were put back into the budget last year with a 30% reduction; however, the additional Governor holdbacks and rescission resulted in a total 60% cut. As a result, the ILCs have laid off staff, reduced salaries, instituted waiting lists and now serve only 25 of the 169 towns and cities in CT. Eliminating ILC funding may put centers out of business.

The ILCs provide essential services for people with all types of disabilities and of all ages. Our services are individualized to the needs of the person and their goals. We are people with disabilities teaching others how to obtain and maintain access to transportation, housing, education, employment, as well as many other life activities that result in independent living and self-sufficiency. As I read through the Governor's proposed budget, I was surprised to see how frequently "independent living" and "self-sufficiency" appear in the mission statements and program descriptions of the Departments of Rehabilitation, Aging, Veterans Affairs, and Mental Health and Addiction Services, and others. And yet, the only state funded program that is specifically designed to assist people with to achieve independent living and self-sufficiency - the Independent Living Centers - is consistently targeted for reduction and elimination. We understand that tough choices must be made. The Independent Living Center line has funded all five (5) ILCs for \$528,680 for many years without any increases - even less with rescissions and reductions. The ILCs are also contractors under the Money Follows the Person (MFP) a program that saves the state money. According to DSS, the average cost of a nursing facility is almost \$149K per person, per year. Transitioning people with disabilities out of nursing facilities is the right thing to do, and it also saves the state millions. In 2016, ILCs transitioned 233 people and many more were prevented from ever entering a nursing facility – saving over \$10.3M annually. The state spends \$528,680 to support five (5) ILCs and we return \$10.3M on MFP alone; that's an amazing return on investment. Without the state IL funding we can't achieve these savings for the state.

Without the support of legislators, funding for CILs would have been defunded several years ago. We are grateful for your support and ask that you continue to support the ILC's funding at \$528,680.

Eileen M. Healy  
186 Saw Pit Hill Road  
Woodbury, CT 06798